REPORT ON RESULTS OF SURVEY OF PUPIL / PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Sponsored by
The Michigan Department of Transportation
Bureau of Urban and Passenger Transportation
Passenger Transportation Division

Center for Applied Research and Rural Studies
Transportation Studies Center
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September 1999

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beginning in 1996, Ferris State University's Transportation Institute hosted a series of meetings on the topic of coordination and consolidation of public and pupil transportation in Michigan. An advisory committee composed of representatives from appropriate State, local, and professional organizations met to help the Transportation Institute identify considerations that should be taken into account when possible joint ventures between public transit and public school agencies were being contemplated.

The advisory committee developed the considerations that were compiled in a survey mailed out to all public transit agencies and school districts within Michigan. A total of 152 usable responses were returned. Given the modest response rate, this is not a scientific sample of opinion and the specific results presented here should be read only as broad indications of respondents' views on particular conditions.

Respondents were asked to rank each consideration as Extremely Important (considerations which need immediate attention), Moderately Important (considerations that need future attention), and Not Important (considerations that require no action). Table 1 in Appendix I shows the overall frequency distribution for each item. The responses are analyzed within this report. The report reviews the survey design process, the sampling design, characteristics of the respondents, and the responses. Attached to this report are unedited respondent written comments (in Appendix II) and a copy of the survey instrument with its cover letter (in Appendix III).

The survey results show that there is a good distribution of respondents by Type of Agency (for transit agencies and school districts), Population Area, Number of Vehicles in Service and Number of Passengers Per Day, and that the respondents reflect the diversity of transportation providers in Michigan.

Respondents were asked whether they had been involved in a cooperative venture and whether they know of other agencies in a cooperative venture. The results suggest that public transit respondents as a group are more sensitized to such topics than are school officials. The reader should keep this in mind when examining the differences in opinion between the two groups.

Political / Legal Considerations

The political and legal considerations focus on the relationship between agencies and their respective goals. They answer the question of how organizations might move toward enhanced coordination. Respondents tended to rank legal considerations above political ones in terms of their immediate importance to people seeking consolidated transportation. Among considerations that are overtly political in nature, only Decreasing

Federal And State Support and Cooperation Among Governing Bodies gained an "Extremely Important" or EI ranking by a majority of respondents.

Respondents from public transit agencies and school districts differ on their rankings for responsibility for students while being transported (higher for school districts). A similar difference also occurs between urban and non-urban transportation providers (higher for non-urban providers). Public transit respondents rate Decreasing Federal And State Support higher than do school district respondents. School district respondents rank the impact of privatization relatively higher in importance than do public transit respondents.

Financial Considerations

The financial considerations focus on the financial resources necessary to fund such services. The overall results show extraordinary consensus on Cost Savings Through Coordination and Funding Security. Three out of four respondents rate each of these as "extremely important." This is balanced by the participants' high EI ranking of Level of Financial Support. Respondents appear to convey the idea that while potential cost savings encourage consolidation investigation, the resulting service still demands sufficient and stable financial support. This point is uniform across all groups of respondents.

Safety Considerations

Safety-related considerations were separated from other operational concerns. There were wide differences between school district and public transit agency respondents. For nine of the ten safety considerations, school district respondents are more likely than are public transit respondents to provide an "extremely important" rating. On average, their EI ranking for each item is nearly thirty percentage points higher than those made by public transit agency respondents. The rank order of importance within the two groups, however, is similar. These differences in safety perspectives represent the most significant barrier to the organizations themselves pursuing further coordination or service consolidation. They also are likely to resonate among school constituencies within the district.

Urban providers rated Passenger Safety somewhat lower than non-urban providers. They also differed on Safety And Warning Devices On Buses and on Driver And Staff Training.

Among respondents with experience in cooperative ventures, four of five think passenger safety is extremely important, but that consolidation is not quite as large a threat to safety as those without such experience might imagine it to be.

Organizational Considerations

Organizational considerations focus on the agency's position in a broader intergovernmental environment that includes state and local government, with the attendant questions of policy responsibilities. Agency responsibilities and student conduct codes received an EI rating from a majority of all respondents. School respondents are more likely to rate conduct codes as extremely important. Public transit agency respondents are more likely to rate Policy Development as extremely important.

A large majority of respondents rate Establish School and Transit Agency Responsibilities as extremely important. The rating increases to over 70 percent for those respondents with experience in cooperative ventures. This suggests that framers of any coordinated or consolidated service must carefully lay out the arrangements and respective responsibilities of participant organizations. Most respondents gave Need for Broader Representation Within the Organization a moderately important rating. While this is the consensus among school district respondents, transit representatives are less consistent as a group in their rating of this item.

Operational Considerations

Operational considerations include those that apply to the daily operations of a coordinated or consolidated service. There is consensus on operational considerations. Some differences occur, primarily due to different outlooks pertaining to safety and regulatory conditions governing student rider populations and their eligibility. A majority of all respondents rated eleven of thirteen considerations as extremely important. Of these, there are no significant differences among respondents on seven of them. Respondents agree on the importance of operational details, regardless of their type of agency, their experience in cooperative ventures, and whether they operate in an urban or non-urban environment. Differences emerged on Responsibility for Enforcement of Student Discipline Policies and Procedures and Guidelines for Transporting Special Needs Populations (higher for school respondents in each case).

Public Relations Considerations

Public relations considerations focus on those related to communications among various constituencies. The overall top-rated consideration was Parental Concerns. However, school respondents rate it higher than do public transit respondents. There is consensus on Ridership Concerns. Taken together, the majorities on these two considerations reveal that transportation providers seek to be responsive to their primary constituencies.

Personnel Considerations

Personnel considerations include those related to the use of human resources to provide transportation service. Training and Education gained a large majority of EI ratings from school district officials. A smaller, but solid, majority of public transit respondents rank this as extremely important. A majority of all respondents rate Collective Bargaining Agreements and Differences in Employee Qualifications and Certifications as extremely important.

Overall, the survey results suggest the feasibility of consolidation, but point to issues that will need to be addressed to achieve success.

REPORT ON RESULTS OF SURVEY OF PUPIL/PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION CONSIDERATIONS

I. Introduction

Beginning in 1996, Ferris State University's Transportation Institute hosted a series of meetings on the topic of coordination and consolidation of public and pupil transportation in Michigan. An advisory committee composed of representatives from local public transportation agencies, the Michigan Department of Transportation, local school districts, the Michigan Department of Education, and appropriate professional organizations met over a period of two years. The purpose of the advisory committee was to help the Transportation Institute identify considerations that should be taken into account when possible joint ventures between public transit and public school agencies were being contemplated.

The advisory committee met several times to develop the considerations that were compiled in a survey mailed out to all public transit agencies and school districts within Michigan. A total of 152 usable responses were returned. The responses are analyzed within this report. The report reviews the survey design process, the sampling design, characteristics of the respondents, and the responses. Attached to this report are unedited respondent written comments (in Appendix II) and a copy of the survey instrument with its cover letter (in Appendix III).

II. Survey Design Process

This part of the report begins by briefly describing the considerations contained in the survey and how they were selected.

In 1996, Ferris State University's Transportation Institute convened a series of focus groups involving about two dozen representatives of school transportation and public transportation providers in Michigan. In many instances, those in attendance were intimately involved in cooperative or consolidation efforts between school and public transportation. Participants were asked first to identify the items that they thought should be addressed by persons who were thinking about enhancing cooperation between or consolidation of pupil and public transportation providers.

It was agreed that these items would be called "considerations" rather than issues. They were "considerations" in the sense that they represented factors that would be included in a decision calculus. The term "issue" implied a sense of confrontation when in practice only some could become the focus of conflict. Once listed, these items were refined and sorted under categories that were collectively determined by participants.

Seven general categories were identified: Political/Legal, Financial, Safety, Organizational, Operational, Public Relations, and Personnel. Then each consideration and its label were reviewed for conceptual clarity and relative importance to any

coordination/consolidation effort. Some items were removed and others combined under a label that a majority of participants thought was well understood by professionals in each field.

The political and legal considerations focus on the relationship between agencies and their respective goals. They answer the question of how might organizations move toward enhanced coordination. The financial considerations focus on the financial resources necessary to fund such services. Safety-related considerations were separated from other operational concerns. However, in some cases, some dimensions of safety considerations carry into the other categories. Organizational considerations focus on the agency's position in a broader intergovernmental environment that includes state and local government, with the attendant questions of policy responsibilities. Operational considerations include those that apply to the daily operations of a coordinated or consolidated service. Public relations considerations focus on those related to communications among various constituencies. Finally, personnel considerations include those related to the use of human resources to provide transportation service. For each consideration, respondents were asked to rank it as Extremely Important (considerations which need immediate attention), Moderately Important (considerations that need future attention), and Not Important (considerations that require no action). Table 1 in Appendix I shows the overall frequency distribution for each question.

Given the considerable number of items for which information would be collected from a large and diverse population, officials at the FSU Transportation Institute decided that the only feasible means of surveying transportation officials was a mail survey. In some survey contexts, personal interviews or telephone conversations are the preferred means of measuring officials' views. In this case, however, the amount of information was too extensive for a short telephone call, and the resources needed for personal interviews were unavailable. A mail survey would have the advantage of allowing respondents to reflect on their answers before completing the survey. The mail survey format was therefore employed.

III. Sample Design

A mailing list was compiled that included the names and addresses of all public transportation agencies and public school superintendents within Michigan. Of 625 surveys mailed to this group in May 1996, about 77 were returned for a rate of 12.32%. It was determined that a large number of the surveys sent to school superintendents were not being returned or forwarded to their transportation directors for completion.

A second survey mailing was sent to school transportation directors from a list of 525 names provided by the Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation. This survey was sent out in June 1996. This survey garnered 75 responses. Thus a total of 152 surveys were returned from both mailings.

Given the modest response rate, this is not a scientific sample of opinion and the specific results presented here should be read only as broad indications of respondents' views on

particular conditions. For the same reason, no margin of error or other measure of precision is displayed. In order to have a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percent with a 95 percent confidence level, it would have been necessary to complete approximately 285 surveys from the entire population of transportation officials.

IV. Characteristics of Survey Respondents

The survey contained several background questions that can be used to assess the characteristics of the respondents. These indicate how diverse the sample is. The following tables result from the questions on Type of Operation, Population Area, Number of Vehicles in service, and Number of passengers per day.

Table 2. Type of Operation	
Transit	16.9 %
Public School District	75.3 %
Intermediate School District	5.2 %
Private School	2.6%

Table 3. Population Area	
Urban	30.7 %
Non-urban	69.3 %

Table 4. Number of Vehicles in Service				
Mean	36.7	First Quartile	40 - 600	
Median	22.0	Second Quartile	22 - 39	
Standard Deviation	63.1	Third Quartile	12 - 21	
		Fourth Quartile	1 - 11	

Table 5. Number of Passengers Per Day				
Mean	2483	First Quartile	2301 - 50000	
Median	1200	Second Quartile	1201 - 2300	
Standard Deviation	5561	Third Quartile	601 - 1200	
		Fourth Quartile	30 – 600	

These results show that there is a good distribution of respondents by Type of Agency (for transit agencies and school districts), Population Area, Number of Vehicles in Service and Number of Passengers Per Day. The latter two variables, Vehicles and Passengers, reveal a large distribution of fleet size and passenger load. This reflects the diversity in organizational size of transportation providers in Michigan. Note that the Intermediate School Districts and Private Schools are under-represented. As mentioned earlier, given the number of responses relative to the population, caution should be exercised while reading the findings reported here.

Respondents were asked whether they had been involved in a cooperative venture and whether they know of other agencies in a cooperative venture. These results are shown in Table 6 below. It illustrates that there are substantial differences in the reported knowledge of peer involvement in cooperative transportation ventures. Sixteen of twenty-five public transportation agency respondents (64%) have both engaged in and know of cooperative ventures. Only thirteen of 105 school district respondents (13%) claim both knowledge and experience. In looking at the opposite cells, only 2 of 25 public transportation respondents neither knew of cooperative ventures nor participated in one. However, sixty percent of school district respondents (63 of 105) did not know of such experiences nor participated in one. This suggests that public transportation respondents as a group are more sensitized to such topics than are school officials. The reader should keep this in mind when examining the differences in opinion between the two groups.

Table 6. Respondent's Knowledge of Other Cooperative Ventures by Organization's Involvement in Cooperative Ventures, Controlling by Type of Agency

Transit Agency

		Does Respondent Know Of Others In Cooperative Venture? Yes	No	Total
Has Organization Been Involved In Cooperative Venture?	Yes	16	03	19
	No	04	02	06
	Total	20	05	25

Public School District

		Does Respondent Know Of Others In Cooperative Venture? Yes	No	Total
Has Organization Been Involved In Cooperative Venture?	Yes	13	07	20
	No	22	63	85
	Total	35	70	105

V. Discussion of Responses

Political/Legal Considerations

As shown in Table 1 in Appendix 1 (p. 16), respondents tended to rank legal considerations above political ones in terms of their immediate importance to people seeking consolidated transportation. Clearly legal concerns outweigh political ones in the opinion of transportation officials. Over seventy percent of respondents indicated that Responsibility For Students While Being Transported and Compliance With State And Federal Regulations were "extremely important." (Note: The questionnaire defined an "extremely important" item as one that required the immediate attention of officials seeking consolidation.) These two considerations are conceptually related in the sense that responsibility for student transportation is highly regulated by both the state and federal governments. All other

considerations related to the legal environment of student transportation gained an "extremely important" (EI) rating from more than 50 percent of all respondents.

Among considerations that are overtly political in nature, only Decreasing Federal And State Support (62.8%) and Cooperation Among Governing Bodies (62%) gained an EI ranking by a majority of respondents. All other political considerations fell in the 40 percent range. They included Initiating Change In Relevant Legislation and Local Political Issues Impacting Transportation. The lowest ranked consideration, Service To Non-public Schools, probably reflects the fact that non-public schools are not distinctly different from public schools in terms of an agency's organizational and regulatory responsibility for its student transportation.

Turning our attention to differences among respondents, some variation occurs in the above rankings. The relevant differences, or those which are statistically likely to occur in the population based on a Chi-Square test of significance, are shown in Table 7 below. First, respondents from Public Transit Agencies and School Districts differ on their rankings for Responsibility For Students, Decreasing Federal And State Support and the Impact Of Privatization. School district respondents rate responsibility for students while being transported much higher in EI than do public transit respondents (about 35% higher, 81.1% vs. 46.2%). This may reflect the ambiguity surrounding state law governing pupil transportation (P.A. 187, or the Pupil Transportation Act).

A school district is only responsible, by statute, while the bus is working, i.e., the red lights are on. If, however, there are threatening circumstances at the stop, liability expands such that the driver becomes an "agent" of the district and must take steps to resolve problems or act as circumstances dictate. Public transit agency respondents are less likely to rate this consideration as extremely important because students represent one rider group among other public rider groups, including elders and the disabled, that also require consideration.

Table 7. Differences Among Respondents On Political / Legal Considerations

	Extremely Important	n	Public Transit	School District	Non-Urban	Urban
POLITICAL / LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS						
Responsibility for students while being transported	75.0	148	46.2	81.1	60.0	81.2
Decreasing federal/state support	62.8	148	84.0	58.5		
Impact of privatization	40.9	149	11.5	47.2		

A similar difference in ranking also occurs between urban and non-urban transportation providers. Eighty-one percent of Non-Urban providers rank Responsibility For Students as EI while only 60 percent of urban providers do so. Urban providers run buses to specific stops at given times. Their customers *may* be faceless and everyone adjusts to service expectations. Non-urban providers tend to have frequent interaction with customers. They make "contacts" for each service event. They consequently take a stronger standard of extreme care.

Among public transit respondents, we see a substantial increase in the rating of Decreasing Federal And State Support (84%) relative to that by respondents from school districts

(58.5%). This difference reflects the large changes in federal and state financial support to public transit agencies over the last decade or so. One must also recall that these survey data were collected prior to the latest gasoline tax increase and change in the State's funding formula for public transit. Nonetheless, political support for the public transportation industry is much more unstable than that for pupil transportation, although implementation of Michigan's Proposal A likely increased the EI rating by school district respondents above what it may have been in 1994. This inference is supported by the relatively higher EI rating on the Impact Of Privatization from school district respondents than from public transit respondents (47.2% vs. 11.5%). Implementation of Proposal A's funding formula, as well as subsequent state law has compelled many districts to consider privatization of auxiliary services like transportation. Some districts (Pinckney, Pontiac and Climax-Scotts Schools) have committed to private transportation company contracts. These factors contribute to the likelihood that school district respondents would rate the impact as extremely important and as requiring immediate attention.

Financial Considerations

The overall frequency distribution in Table 1 on page 16, and in Table 8 below, shows extraordinary consensus on two financial considerations, Cost Savings Through Coordination and Funding Security. Three out of four respondents rate each of these as "extremely important." When examining the two considerations in a crosstabulation (not shown here), one finds that 92 of 153 respondents (about 60%) rank both items as EI. Further, nearly 65 percent of all respondents rank the Level of Financial Support for coordinated or consolidated service as an extremely important consideration. When examining all three considerations together, 75 of 152 respondents (49.3%) rank all three as EI. Moreover, there are no significant differences between respondents from public transit agencies and school districts, urban and non-urban providers, and those with experience in coordination ventures vs. those without experience.

Table 8. Respondents Ranking of Financial Considerations

	% Extremely Important
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	
Cost savings through transportation coordination and/or consolidation	75.5
Funding security	73.8
Level of financial support	64.6
Subsidies	44.1
Different millages for school and transportation	41.4
Urban vs. non-urban cost differences	40.6

Respondents clearly raise the point that financial considerations are of extreme importance to leaders if they are to change transportation service. A careful analysis, however, reveals a robust concept of consolidation finances. Clearly, the cost savings issue is seen as crucial. Yet this is balanced by the participants' high EI ranking of funding security

(73.8%). Similarly, there is a high proportion (64.6%) of EI ratings for Level of Financial Support. As noted in the discussion of political and legal considerations above, this key point was made by public transit agency respondents in their high ranking of Decreasing Federal/State Support.

Respondents rate the other financial considerations in the forty percent range. Subsidies, different millage support, and urban/non-urban cost differences are relatively less critical in the short run than are the considerations of overall financial support. In summary, respondents appear to convey the idea that while potential cost savings encourage consolidation investigation, the resulting service still demands sufficient and stable financial support. This point is uniform across all groups of respondents.

Safety Considerations

This section of the survey results reveals wide differences between respondents from school districts and public transit agencies. The overall distribution of responses in Table 1 shows that all but two safety considerations gain an EI rating by a majority of respondents. But these results stem from the disproportionate number of school district respondents in the sample. When respondents are divided by type of agency, one finds a significant difference between those from school districts and those from public transit agencies on all but one consideration, Ridership Compatibility. This consideration also fails to gain a majority of EI ratings. Only one other consideration, Pupil Bus Stop Signage, failed to gain a majority EI rating among school district respondents. The differences between school district and public transit respondents are shown in Table 9 below.

For nine of the ten safety considerations, school district respondents are much more likely than are public transit respondents to provide an "extremely important" rating. On average, their EI ranking for each item is nearly thirty percentage points higher than those made by public transit agency respondents (29.58%). The rank order of importance within each group, however, is very similar.

Table 9. Differences Between Public Transit and School District Respondents On Safety Considerations

	Extremely Important	n	Public Transit	School District
SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS				
Passenger safety	87.4	151	65.4	92.0
Driver and staff training	79.3	150	57.7	83.9
Specific safety considerations for pupils	74.7	150	46.2	80.6
Safety and security measures for younger pupils	72.7	150	46.2	78.2
Pupil behavior	70.0	150	46.2	75.0
Safety and warning devices on buses	68.0	150	42.3	73.4
Pupil safety education	63.1	149	34.6	69.1
Pupil bus stop locations	61.1	149	38.5	65.9

Ridership compatibility	49.7	149		
Pupil bus stop signage	36.2	149	15.4	40.7

Among transit agency respondents, only Passenger Safety (65.4%) and Driver And Staff Training (57.7%) gained a majority of EI ratings. These were also the number one (92.0%) and number two (83.6%) ranked considerations among school district respondents. Other highly rated considerations among school district respondents focused on pupil safety and behavior. Those related to bus stops (locations and signage) were the lowest ranked considerations. The sole safety consideration pertaining to buses (Safety And Warning Devices on Buses) gained a 73.4% rating among school respondents but only a 42.3% rating from public transit agency respondents.

These striking differences can be attributed to different organizational outlooks and professional training. First, the school transportation industry emphasizes passenger safety above any other consideration. This is quickly apparent to anyone who reviews the industry's professional literature. Second, this emphasis stems from an awareness that school districts are transporting in virtually every case people who legally are minors, many of whom are very young (four- or five-year-old kindergarten students, etc). Third, industry regulations spell out minimum standards for school bus driver training, and similar minimums are not present in the public transit agency industry. Fourth, school buses are designed and regulated for safety features and performance before any other vehicular consideration. Many bus regulations are written exclusively for those that are used in transporting school children. Last, most school districts devote some time and attention to educating students in the proper ways to ride on and behave while riding a bus. Public transit agencies typically do not offer rider training to passengers, although the agencies in this study that transport school-aged children do so.

These differences in safety perspectives represent the most significant barrier to the organizations themselves pursuing further coordination or service consolidation. They also are likely to resonate among school constituencies within the district.

There are three differences of importance in rankings between Urban and Non-urban transportation providers, as shown in Table 10 below. Urban providers rate Passenger Safety somewhat lower (13.5%) than non-urban providers, although it still rates as EI among almost 80% of urban respondents. There is a somewhat wider split for Safety And Warning Devices On Buses (24.4% lower for Urban respondents) and for Driver And Staff Training (26.6% lower for Urban). These differences may stem from the longer distances traveled by non-urban drivers, as well as the traffic environment and road condition differences between urban and non-urban districts. Predominantly rural districts may have a greater need for training a smaller pool of potential drivers as well as having them drive under conditions requiring more frequent use of flashers, or where weather may present a greater threat to student safety.

Table 10. Differences Between Urban and Non-urban Respondents On Safety Considerations

	Extremely Important	n	Urban	Non-Urban
SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS				
Passenger safety	87.4	151	78.7	92.2
Driver and staff training	79.3	150	57.7	83.9
Safety and warning devices on buses	68.0	150	51.1	75.5

Only one difference appeared between those respondents reporting some involvement in coordination ventures and those without such experience. Respondents with experience in cooperative ventures ranked Passenger Safety somewhat lower as a group than did respondents without similar experience. One may conclude that 4 of 5 experienced respondents think passenger safety is extremely important in these ventures, but that consolidation is not quite as large a threat to safety as those without such experience might imagine it to be.

Organizational Considerations

In Table 1, results show that two organizational considerations receive an EI rating from a majority of all respondents. Sixty-five percent of respondents rate Establish Agency Responsibilities and almost 60% rate Establish Code of Conduct for Student Behavior as extremely important considerations. Developing policy and planning activity considerations are ranked in the high forty percent range. Jurisdictional responsibilities, representational change, and intergovernmental liaisons are relatively less immediate in their importance, according to all respondents.

There are variations in the ranking between respondents from public transit agencies and school districts, as well as between respondents from agencies experienced in cooperative ventures and those who are not. Looking first at the differences between transit agencies and school districts shown in Table 11 below, one finds that school respondents are much more likely than public transit respondents to rate Establish A Code of Conduct for Student Behavior as extremely important (63.6% vs. 40%). This corresponds to the school respondents' concern with pupil behavior under the safety consideration grouping. Public transit agency respondents, on the other hand, are more likely than school respondents to rate Policy Development as extremely important (53.8% vs. 45.9%). This may be because they are still establishing policy, while for school districts this task has in many cases already been completed.

Table 11. Differences Between Public Transit and School District Respondents On Organizational Considerations.

	Extremely Important	n	Public Transit	School District
ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS				
Establish a code of conduct for student behavior	59.6	146	40.0	63.6

Policy development	47.3	148	53.8	45.9
Need for new org. structure w/ broader representation	28.8	146	33.3	27.9

There is a large majority of respondents (65.5%) who rate Establish School and Transit Agency Responsibilities as extremely important. The rating increases to over 70 percent for those respondents with experience in cooperative ventures (see Table 12 below). This suggests that, in the opinion of experienced respondents, framers of any coordinated or consolidated service must carefully lay out the arrangements and respective responsibilities of participant organizations. The respondent rankings for Establish a Code of Conduct for Student Behavior and Policy Development considerations are parts of this effort. The Need for Broader Representation Within the Organization consideration (and by implication its governing body) received a mixed response, as shown in Table 1. Most respondents give it a moderately important rating. While this is the consensus among school district respondents, it is less the case among transit agency respondents. Transit representatives are split in thirds on this consideration (33.3% extremely, 33.3% moderately, 33.3% not important). This may reflect the variety in transit agency governing boards organized under different statutes as compared to a more uniform school board comprised of elected officials.

Table 12. Differences Between Respondents With Experience in Cooperative Ventures and Respondents Without Such Experience, On Organizational Considerations.

	Extremely Important	n	Cooperative Ventures	No Cooperative Ventures
ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS				
Establish school and transit agency responsibilities	65.5	148	70.4	62.8

Operational Considerations

Table 1 reveals that a majority of all respondents rate eleven of thirteen considerations as extremely important. Only Establish Student Eligibility (42%) and Logistics for School and Public Special Events (34.7%) fail to gain an EI majority. Furthermore, of the eleven considerations that gain a majority, there are no large differences among respondents on seven of them. A high degree of consensus exists on such considerations as Coordination of School Class Schedules & Transit Agency Route Schedules, Cooperative Communication System between Schools and Public Transit Agencies, Coordination of School Closings, and Operational Liability. Respondents agree on the importance of operational details, regardless of their type of agency, their experience in cooperative ventures, and whether they operate in an urban or non-urban environment.

Of the top three considerations, however, school district and public transit agency respondents differ on the importance of two of them. These and other differences are shown in Table 13 below. While Responsibility for Enforcement of Student Discipline Policies and Procedures gains an EI rating of 71.3% overall, it is higher for school respondents (75.0%) and lower for public transit respondents (53.8%). Similarly, school

respondents rate Guidelines for Transporting Special Needs Populations as more important than do public transit respondents (71.9% vs 37.5%). These differences may be explained by school respondents' attention to student behavior as a safety issue, the state regulations that make school districts responsible for students while they are transported, and the schools' distinction between special education and general education pupil transportation. These two major distinctions of the school transportation program reflect substantial operational differences in how school districts transport their students.

Table 13. Differences Between Public Transit and School District Respondents On Operational Considerations.

	Extremely Important	n	Public Transit	School District
OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS				
Responsibility for enforcement of student discipline	71.3	150	53.8	75.0
Guidelines for transporting special needs populations	66.2	145	37.5	71.9
Guidelines for transporting different populations	50.3	149	26.9	55.3
Location of student bus stops	50.0	150	23.1	55.6
Establish student eligibility	42.0	150	19.2	46.8
Logistics for school and public special events	34.7	150	15.4	38.7

In contrast, respondents from public transit agencies are more likely to see students as one of several rider groups, and hence they are less likely to treat them as a unique population. Second, public transit respondents see disabled passengers collectively as a primary consumer group. They are not likely to distinguish disabled passengers by age and consequently make few distinctions between younger school-aged and older disabled passengers.

Differences between respondents from schools and public transit agencies also exist for considerations about Guidelines for Transporting Different School Populations and Location of Student Bus Stops. Again, transit agency respondents are less likely to rate these considerations as EI. School district respondents are somewhat more likely to rate the bus stop consideration as extremely important because it reflects a safety element. The guidelines for different populations, as in the case with special needs populations noted above, may have to do with the school's division of general and special education transportation.

While not gaining a majority of EI ratings from either group, there is a large difference between school and transit agency respondents over the consideration of Establish Student Eligibility (46.8% vs. 19.2%). Public transit agency respondents, unlike school officials, do not have eligibility standards for their riders. This may explain their low EI rating of this consideration.

In summary, there is remarkable consensus on most Operational Considerations. Some differences occur, primarily due to different outlooks pertaining to safety and regulatory conditions governing student rider populations and their eligibility.

Public Relations Considerations

The overall top-rated consideration, Parental Concerns, is viewed as extremely important by 73.2% of all respondents. However, there is a significant difference between respondents from public transit agencies and school districts on this item, as shown in Table 14 below. School respondents tend to rate it higher (76.4%) while public transit respondents as a group rate it about 20 points lower in extreme importance. There is consensus on the second ranked consideration, Ridership Concerns. Taken together, the majorities on these two considerations reveal that transportation providers seek to be responsive to their primary constituencies. This does not extend to the use of formal procedures to organize such constituencies so as to facilitate feedback. Thus local advisory committees, building public support and new marketing approaches fail to gain a majority of extremely important scores. Both school district and public transit agency respondents view these considerations as something generally desirable but also as something that can be put off until later after the initial coordination or consolidated service is begun.

Table 14. Differences Between Public Transit and School District Respondents On Public Relations Considerations.

	Extremely Important	n	Public Transit	School District
PUBLIC RELATONS CONSIDERATIONS				
Parental concerns	73.2	149	57.7	76.4

Personnel Considerations

As shown in Table 15 below, the Training and Education consideration gains a large majority of EI ratings from school district officials. Seventy-seven percent of school district respondents view this as extremely important. This percentage drops to about 58% for public transit respondents, a difference of 20 points. This may be due once again to the school transportation industry's emphasis on training as a preventive safety measure. Nonetheless, the percentage differences reflect that a solid majority of public transit agency respondents think that it is extremely important. Almost 6 out of 10 such respondents give it an EI ranking.

Table 15. Differences Between Public Transit and School District Respondents On Personnel Considerations.

	Extremely Important	n	Public Transit	School District
PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS				
Training and education	73.6	148	57.7	77.0

In looking at the overall rankings in Table 1 (see next page), one finds that a majority of all respondents rate Collective Bargaining Agreements and Differences in Employee Qualifications and Certifications as extremely important. There are no statistically significant differences among any of the measured subgroups. One would expect that there is understanding among all groups on the nature of collective bargaining with labor groups, including drivers. However, from our interviews with officials involved in transportation coordination or consolidation, it appears that persons in one segment of the transportation industry (for example, schools) are not likely to know of the employee qualifications and certifications required of personnel in the other industry segment (for example, public transit agencies). Perhaps this is the reason why perceived differences are rated as EI by a majority of respondents. Job specific considerations like wages and work rules fall in the forty percent range, while differences between full-and part-time employees is ranked as a moderately important consideration.

Appendix I

TABLE 1. OVERALL FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION

Political/Legal Considerations	Extremely Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Number Responses
Responsibility for students while being transported	75.0	19.6	5.4	148
Compliance with federal/state regulations	71.1	24.2	4.7	149
Funding rules, formulas, and sources	67.6	27.0	5.4	148
Identify legal barriers to school/transit agency cooperation	64.2	31.1	4.7	148
Decreasing federal/state support	62.8	30.4	6.8	148
Cooperation of governing bodies	62.0	31.3	6.7	150
Integration of PA 187 and Act 51	54.5	38.6	6.9	145
Insurance	50.7	39.2	10.1	148
Initiate a process to eliminate barriers and revise relevant legislation	47.7	45.6	6.7	149
Identify administrative barriers to school/transit agency cooperation	45.0	47.7	7.4	149
Local political issues impacting transportation	42.5	42.5	15.1	146
Impact of privatization	40.9	42.3	16.8	149
Service to non-public schools	24.8	49.0	26.2	149
Financial Considerations				
Cost savings through transportation coordination and/or consolidation	75.5	20.4	4.1	147
Funding security	73.8	22.8	3.4	149
Level of financial support	64.6	32.7	2.7	147
Subsidies	44.1	49.0	6.9	145
Different millages for school and transportation	41.4	45.5	13.1	145
Urban vs. non-urban cost differences	40.6	37.8	21.7	143
Safety Considerations				
Passenger safety	87.4	9.9	2.6	151
Driver and staff training	79.3	18.7	2.0	150
Specific safety considerations for pupils	74.7	22.0	3.3	150
Safety and security measures for younger pupils (K-5th grade)	72.7	24.7	2.7	150
Pupil behavior	70.0	28.0	2.0	150
Safety and warning devices on buses	68.0	29.3	2.7	150
Pupil safety education	63.1	34.2	2.7	149
Pupil bus stop locations	61.1	36.2	2.7	149
Ridership compatibility	49.7	43.0	7.4	149
Pupil bus stop signage	36.2	51.7	12.1	149
Organizational Considerations				
Establish school and transit agency responsibilities	65.5	27.7	6.8	148
Establish a code of conduct for student behavior	59.6	34.2	6.2	146
Policy development	47.3	46.4	6.1	148
Strategic, tactical, and operational planning	47.3	45.2	7.5	146
Jurisdictional responsibilities	35.4	56.5	8.2	147
Need for new organizational structure with broader representation	28.8	56.2	15.1	146
National/State/Local liaison	19.0	63.9	17.0	147

Operational Considerations	Extremely Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Number Responses
Responsibility for enforcement of student discipline policies and procedures	71.3	24.7	4.0	150
Coordination of school class schedules and transit agency route schedules	67.6	27.7	4.7	148
Guidelines for transporting special needs populations	66.2	26.2	7.6	145
Cooperative communication system between schools and public transit agency	62.7	33.3	4.0	150
Coordination of school closings	61.1	30.9	8.1	149
Operational liability	61.1	35.6	3.4	149
Route location and route interfacing	59.5	37.8	2.7	148
Operational policies and procedures	55.3	42.0	2.7	150
Fleet composition, maintenance, and accessory equipment requirements	54.7	40.7	4.7	150
Guidelines for transporting different school populations (pre- to high school)	50.3	45.0	4.7	149
Location of student bus stops	50.0	47.3	2.7	150
Establish student eligibility	42.0	49.3	8.7	150
Logistics for school and public special events	34.7	54.7	10.7	150
Public Relations Considerations				
Parental concerns	73.2	22.8	4.0	149
Ridership concerns	57.7	36.9	5.4	149
Conflict identification and resolution process	43.6	47.0	9.4	149
Local advisory committees	28.4	57.4	14.2	148
New marketing approaches	25.5	55.7	18.8	149
Building public support through special activities	22.8	61.7	15.4	149
Personnel Considerations				
Training and education	73.6	23.0	3.4	148
Collective bargaining agreements	57.7	34.9	7.4	149
Differences in employee qualifications and certifications	53.1	39.5	7.5	147
Wage and benefit differentials (between schools and transit agencies)	48.3	43.0	8.7	149
Differences in employee work rules	44.7	4.0	7.3	150
Job specifications	43.6	51.0	5.4	149
Employee evaluation	41.5	49.7	8.8	147
Part time vs. full time employees	27.5	59.7	12.8	149

Appendix II

Comments

Respondents were asked: "Please add any additional comments concerning potential cooperative ventures between schools and local transit agencies."

A number of years ago we participated in a study group in out (sic) area regarding public transit/school transit cooperation or consolidation. The consensus was to continue to investigate areas of cooperation as opportunities may arise, but none have arisen. The schools at that time did not have a financial incentive to investigate cooperative relationships further.

A school district needs to inform the public of viable options which for the most part are reduction of services or privatization as a cost cutting measure. Acceptance and cooperation are essential. An educated customer and partnership with the contractor and school board is critical. A cooperative venture is a fiscal matter not a political topic.

A transit system was tried in Baraga County. When the transit subsidy ceased, the system discontinued. Is the population base sufficient?

All of the questions seem extremely important considering the subject matter.

As a rural community this would appear to be a difficult task. It would mean that the transit agent would have to expand.

At present time transit drivers are not trained or certified to transport school students. Also, transit buses are not equipped with proper safety equipment to insure our #1 priority "A Safe Ride for the Kids." Kids are safer in black and yellows with trained drivers through Michigan school bus driver education courses.

Consider the possibility of utilizing existing school bus fleets to provide public transportation services.

Continued "turf" protection - School transportation officials find new "directions" regarding transit/school integration hard to accept. Point to "safety" issues--nothing that can't be addressed if everyone would accept the premise that together we can accomplish more!

Cost of transit and reimbursement from school district.

Demands during peak ride times for transit and schools are the same; thus equipment/personnel cannot be widely distributed--higher costs. Concerns of existing transit customers in changing service to accommodate schools. Cost savings--fallacy no real cost savings (sic), but more rides with dollars spent.

Eventually all transportation systems should be combined not only for cost containment but for efficiency and flexibility. Your survey provides some information and "sheds some light" on the important factors that are involved to help make this concept a reality.

From which point of view regarding the answer to safety considerations. School buses currently have considered these issues. What's your point?

Good Luck. 1) Money is always a factor. 2) Safety is always a CRITICAL factor. 3) MEA will challenge your efforts with lawsuits.

GRATA has a contract with Grand Rapids Public Schools for a per student cost with students using their I.D. and/or special pass. We don't provide special school service.

I believe in cooperative effort. These specialized pieces of equipment are similar, public conveyances paid for in part by public funds and to maximize use and minimize down times should financially serve a public need and allow additional service to a larger population. The elderly and handicapped could be positively impacted by this cooperation. Students could learn from a more universal environment. Duplication of administration and maintenance services could be cost effective.

I believe that there are places where we can work cooperatively together. School buses could go to public transit very easily.

I believe there is an advantage to coordination. However, it's been my experience that public transit has no flexibility and therefore can not meet the schools needs. Schools have better training for staff, better specifications for buses, better inspection programs and can meet the needs of the community midday, evening, and weekend with low changes. Our cost are actual--public transit cost are subsidized.

I did not complete the balance of this because there are no public agencies in the area to provide services. If there was to be privatization, the existing laws and procedures are adequate to do the job. The public employee labor organizations are politically and financially powerful. Specific laws that protect the employer would be essential.

Let's cut through the turfdom and politics and do what makes sense!

Maintenance is one area cooperative venture would work especially in rural areas. For example one full time mechanic could handle Harbor Springs, Alanson, Pellston, and Mackinaw City.

Most transit organizations are more concerned with public and not pupil transportation. To do what school districts do is difficult for the transit agencies; door to door, school calendar, etc.

Need to keep in mind the position both sides start from. 1) School districts--some (many?) are mini kingdoms riddled with nepotism--protecting long-term employees may be the most important goal. 2) Transit systems--many (most?) are in a precarious financial situation--never

able to establish adequate administrative structure to manage complex new programs. Most lack strong political base.

Newaygo County has a very active transportation committee comprised of all the key players to actively establish as many joint ventures in the transportation area as possible such as joint training, volunteer training, alcohol and drug consortium, etc. We hope to secure the funding to have a city wide transportation needs study done.

Not being considered at this time, but these would be the problems. 350 students twice daily plus special trips.

Our district currently has a public transit but do not feel that their drivers receive the training that the public school drivers have.

Potential cooperation will be a huge venture with the largest obstacle of control and funding. Large school systems are powerful and do not wish to provide the funds available to them. In areas of three or four school systems the cooperation of sharing will be fought. As a small transit system I do not wish to undertake this responsibility, but I would be part of a cooperative group working together.

Priority of services - Current population served vs. school population. Local school boards/administration retaining "control" of transportation process. FUNDING.

Safety considerations - I see no real problem in this area--all are attainable with some work. We currently provide only regional shuttles for student transportation due to costs. Any cooperative venture would be explored.

School boards and administrators should look beyond just the money (cost). In the long run is it the way to go? Parents, children and the rising costs down the road will need to be looked at. Service will not be the same!! Plus your signing your power to handle situations to local transit.

School district should be willing to create a task force to face the transportation issues. School district don't believe that transit programs, staff and management is up to par to their program.

The likelihood of such a venture is small for this district given the current Board's strong desire to keep its own transportation program.

There is a great deal of value in a broader use of school buses, for example transporting Head Start children. We do this ourselves since the public school cost is too high. I would rather work out cooperative arrangements. Perhaps the school would transport some Head Start pupils and the private agency could transport to vocational schools, special programs, etc. We have a county wide para-transit training program, but public schools are minimally involved.

There is a huge misperception that regional, cooperative ventures will save money. This is unlikely unless school districts change their starting times. Otherwise, districts will need to run their own buses.

There is no public transit system in the area, nor will there be soon. For this reason the questionnaire was not completed.

There needs to be better cooperation between public and non-public schools (Detroit area).

This question is of little importance to our school district because we are a rural district with no close public transit authority.

Transit buses should meet the same FMVSS as school buses, if school children are transported on them.

Transit drivers are not trained as well as school bus drivers for pupil transportation. School buses have more legislative laws and buses more stringent laws (black and yellow, etc.) lights, safety devices.

We don't transport children.

We have been approached to bus students, but as we would have to hire more drivers we did not have time to get organized by the start of the school year. Also, I'm not sure they can afford what we would need to charge.

We have found in the past that because of schedules the public transit isn't able to comply with our schedule.

Wherever public transportation is available students should be taught to access it for jobs, co-op, etc.

Would like to see public school transportation as part of public transportation authority responsibilities. This would eliminate duplication of efforts, multi staff, and save taxpayers money while providing value-added quality transportation for all citizens (student/adult).

Appendix III

Survey Cover Letter and Survey Instrument